

Submitter: Meghan Hammack
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3652

Dear Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meghan Hammack, and I am a special education teacher in the Beaverton School District. I work at FLEX Online School, the district's fully online program, where I have spent the past four years supporting special needs students from kindergarten through 12th grade. I also serve as a union representative for my school.

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 3652, which would make class sizes and caseloads a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in all Oregon schools.

This issue is not only of great importance to me as a special educator but an urgent matter for teachers in all settings. If I want my students with special needs to be properly and equitably supported in their general education classes, class sizes must be addressed, and districts must be held accountable when overcrowded classrooms make learning environments ineffective.

As a special educator, I have personally managed caseloads of 50+ students without any additional adult or paraprofessional support. When I have advocated for additional resources, administrators have repeatedly told me that there is no funding available. And as overwhelming as my caseload has been, mine has not been the highest in the district. Many of my colleagues manage even larger caseloads and receive the same response—there is simply no money for additional support.

When this reality is not just accepted but normalized, is it any wonder that teachers are leaving the profession in droves? Is it surprising that when unions attempt to discuss class sizes and caseloads at the bargaining table, they are met with outright refusal? Given these conditions, is it any shock that Oregon's students are falling so far behind much of the rest of the country?

Currently, districts have the power to determine what is "reasonable"—but their decisions are guided by spreadsheets and dollar signs, not by student needs or what is best for learning. Yes, numbers matter, but not when they come at the expense of education. Not when they take priority over equitable learning environments and the right of students with special needs to a free and appropriate education.

Our school districts must be held accountable for these practices and decisions. For that to happen, class sizes and caseloads must become mandatory subjects of bargaining—because until they are, districts will continue to ignore the conversation. HB 3652 ensures class size and caseloads are part of the negotiation process early on, allowing for meaningful discussions that support student learning and educator

well-being. I urge you, members of this committee, to not only consider the information shared with you today but also to listen to the voices of educators across the state who have stepped out of their classrooms over the past year and a half to push back against districts that continue to ignore this issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meghan Hammack

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FLEX Online School/Beaverton School District

Special Education Department